

Advisory Group to support implementation of the Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance Policy: A Feminist Approach

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mandate

Inspired by the guiding principles of the Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance Policy – A Feminist Approach (CSO Policy), the Advisory Group (CPAG) will provide advice to Global Affairs Canada on the shared approach, vision, and priorities necessary to support effective mutual implementation of the CSO Policy. The CPAG will also play a role in advising the Department on the structure and focus of the CSO-Global Affairs Canada annual meeting.

Principles

The Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness (see Annex 1a) will guide this Advisory Group.

Structure, membership and governance

The CPAG will be comprised of a group of representative CSO stakeholders and Departmental officials with knowledge and expertise related to the nine objectives of the Policy. Civil society members of the CPAG will represent diverse areas of expertise on CSO issues, including feminist approaches to development, and will strive for gender, linguistic, organizational-size and geographic balance among participants.

With this in mind, the CPAG will be made up of twelve members, including eight members from representative Canadian partner organizations from civil society, and selected by civil society, and four members from Global Affairs Canada.

In general, civil society membership in the CPAG will be mandated for one two-year term. However, four civil society representatives may graduate after the first year, and four new civil society representatives may join the four existing CSO members. This phased graduation process will help to maintain diversity among participants and ensure continuity in the work of the CPAG. Global Affairs Canada representatives on the CPAG will be determined annually, to ensure appropriate subject matter expertise.

The Director General, Engaging Canadians Bureau, will serve as co-chair for all CPAG meetings, along with a civil society representative co-chair selected by civil society members. The CSO co-chair will rotate annually. The secretariat for the CPAG will rest within the Engagement and Civil Society Unit of the Engaging Canadians Bureau at Global Affairs Canada.

Finally, the CPAG will report to the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch. The ADM will review and adopt, as appropriate, recommendations from the CPAG in the context of finalizing and putting into place an implementation plan for the CSO Policy, and organizing the annual meetings. The Director General, Engaging Canadians Bureau, will report back to the CPAG on the decisions made with sufficient time prior to the next meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities

The CPAG will:

- Set clear expectations for what it hopes to achieve in the coming year;
- Evaluate and learn from the work of the CPAG on an annual basis, including relative to the expectations set out at the beginning of the year.
- Discuss and advise on priority objectives and action areas for the CSO Policy;
- Recommend additional action areas for inclusion in the implementation plan, including those that are CSO-led, as appropriate (e.g. in the context of milestone activities such as the G7);
- Provide input to the CSO Policy implementation plan, approach and format;
- Advise on the format, agenda, desired outcomes and planning for the CSO Policy annual meeting;
- Share and coordinate with other relevant Global Affairs Canada advisory groups;
- Proactively engage civil society outside of Canada;
- Report, in a timely manner, the key documents and conclusions (in English and French) from each CPAG meeting to Global Affairs Canada staff and the broader civil society community;

Meetings and Administration

The CPAG will meet on a quarterly basis, and may call more meetings on an *ad hoc* basis when warranted and agreed by members.

Meetings will occur by teleconference/videoconference and/or in person. Documents for discussion shall, as much as possible, be shared ahead of the meetings in a timely manner in both official languages. Communications between all members of the CPAG may take place between meetings to support progress on the objectives identified for the year. However key substantive decisions will be taken at meetings.

These terms of references will be reviewed and agreed at the first meeting of the CPAG. They will be revisited on annual basis at the first meeting of the calendar year.

Annex 1a:

Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles¹

Civil society organizations are a vibrant and essential feature in the democratic life of countries across the globe. CSOs collaborate with the full diversity of people and promote their rights. The essential characteristics of CSOs as distinct development actors – that they are voluntary, diverse, non-partisan, autonomous, non-violent, working and collaborating for change – are the foundation for the Istanbul principles for CSO development effectiveness. These principles guide the work and practices of civil society organizations in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy, and in a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.

4. Promote Environmental Sustainability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

5. Practice transparency and accountability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

¹ Please note, the Istanbul Principles, as agreed at the Open Forum's Global Assembly in Istanbul, September 28 -30, 2010, are the foundation of the Open Forum's Draft International Framework on CSO Development Effectiveness. These principles are further elaborated in Version 2 of this Framework, which is being updated and will be found on the Open Forum's web site, www.cso-effectiveness.org.

6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

Guided by these Istanbul principles, CSOs are committed to take pro-active actions to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices. Equally important will be enabling policies and practices by all actors. Through actions consistent with these principles, donor and partner country governments demonstrate their Accra Agenda for Action pledge that they “share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential”. All governments have an obligation to uphold basic human rights – among others, the right to association, the right to assembly, and the freedom of expression. Together these are pre-conditions for effective development.

Istanbul, Turkey

September 29, 2010